




LIJAH



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To Joe with love.

January, 1955.

ELIJAH AND OTHER POEMS.



lijah.

and



ther Dooms.

BY



E L I J A H

AND

Other Poems.

By B. M.,

Author of "Ezekiel and Other Poems."



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ELIJAH.



ENEATH the silent stars I stand alone,
And hear the hollow murmur of the stream,
The whisper of the palm-trees faintly touched
And troubled by this wandering wind that
woke

When the red sun went down: alone I stand,
And see as in a dream these bending skies,
And hear the wind go by. And every sound
Is sorrowful, and every star is dim ;
For God has taken from my head this day
My Master, as He said.

They search for him,—
Now that the moon is rising on the hills
Beyond the river,—in each solemn pass,
In haunted caves, on lonely mountain sides ;
A chosen band of fifty men, who know
The secret places of the wilderness

And fear no evil there ; each seeker cheers
His brother in the quest.

And I alone
Wait idly here, and seek not for my lord ;
Beside the wailing river I sit down,
I weep when I remember him : oh vain
That busy search on those pale hills that shine
Faint in the moonlight,—earth and heaven are faint,
Pale as a desert-dream, and changed,—my sight
Was dazzled by the glories I beheld
When he was taken, and before mine eyes
Still glow the fiery steeds, the chariot burns,
And those strange horsemen ride.

Oh vain this search,
And vain and wild the phantom of a hope
Which haunts my soul to-night, and will not sleep—
That once again, as in past days, the man
I loved and served is only gone from me
To dwell a little while alone with God,
And to return. How often have I watched,
With beating heart and eager eyes, to see
His distant form, beneath the sun or moon,
Descending stately from those lonely heights
Where God received him. Might some blessed hour
But once again restore him, with what joy
Would all my spirit wake and go to him,

And cleave to him more closely evermore :
But ah ! I know, in my sad soul I know,
That never day nor night, nor man nor God
Will bring him back to me.

They think to find
The Master sleeping, with his lofty head
Low pillowed on the stones, his eagle glance
Veiled softly like a weary child's, his brow
Wet with the drops of night: or, if he wakes,
To hear once more that strange and solemn voice
Crying in the vast wilderness,—a cry
Lonely and terrible, to pierce the soul,
Dividing flesh and spirit: or afar
Upon some silent height to see him stand
Wrapped in celestial visions: or to find,
At least to find him dead, and bear him thence.

Then would they bring my Master back again,
And silent in that silent Presence stand,
Whilst I would rise and minister to him
With double reverence, and fold him close
As for eternal sleep ; and when at length
Each solemn rite was ended, and my hands
Could find no further work to do for him,
Contented would I lay my head upon
His grave, and die. My life was hid in him.

But even this poor wish is vain, how vain !—
Thou dost not sleep, O Prophet of the strong
And fiery soul, no gentle clouds of death
Have dimmed those eager eyes, that gazed beyond
The sun at noon : upon no lone hill-side
Shall any seeker find thee, lying low—
After the heat and burden of the day—
Serene and pale beneath the smiling stars,
With night-winds blowing softly on thy brow,
Stirring the hair which never woman's hand
Caressed or touched, and kissing that dead mouth
God filled with thunder.

Something more than death
Has taken thee ; and thou art wholly lost,
And I alone, for ever.

Through the years
I backward gaze this night, and see myself
As once I was : the tranquil life beneath
My father's roof, blessed by my mother's prayers ;
The hopeful seed-times, and the joy fulfilled
In harvest ; all the stir of simple work,
Which prospered daily under smiling suns,
And brought its sure reward : unclouded, calm,
Those happy days rolled over us, save when
We heard,—like distant thunders when the sky
Is clear above,—strange rumours of the Queen,

And rumours of the King; and of a dark
Mysterious Prophet, sent by God to grieve
And thwart them in their sins. But still each hour
Brought me its sunny task, its busy hope,
And I forgot the distant sounds of woe,—
The echoes of a Desert-voice, which cried
Against the throne, and those who sat thereon,
Foretelling wrath.

I, careless in the sun,
Worked on, and sang:—till, on a certain day,—
A day for ever to be marked and kept
Apart from other days,—one passed me by,
And passing looked on me: a man severe,
Lofty of mien, and pale; I knew the garb,
I saw the seal upon the solemn brow,
And the unmeasured depth of eyes that gazed
Beyond the narrow lines of space and time;—
And by that air of awful loneliness,
And by the kingly tread devoid of fear
Though many sought his life,—by every sign,
By every solemn token, as I gazed,
I knew the man of whom our ears had heard,
The man of God, before whose face the Queen
And King had trembled.

Now he looked on me,
Pausing an instant only: in that look

I read a summons for my idle heart,
A summons that should take me far away
To share a heavy burden, through dark days
And darker nights of trouble: in his eyes
I saw a pity, all but infinite,
And yet that summons dread. I trembling stood:
Then with a sudden movement he unclasped
The Prophet's mantle which he wore, and laid
That sign upon my shoulder; and he passed.

But all my soul went after him; the world,
My sunny world, was gone, my work was dead,
The pleasant fields were bare, and all the hope
And promise of the spring died suddenly
As it was born. My soul went after him,
And everything was changed. I made a feast,
And called my friends, and bade them all farewell;
I kissed my father's hand, my mother's cheek,
And prayed with tears their blessing, till with tears
They gave it, seeing God had called their son;
For I, already lost to them, and lost
To common life, and work, and home, and friends,
Stood ready to depart.

Then forth I went,
Forsaking father, mother, all I had,—
And all I hoped for through the sunny years,—

Content for evermore to follow him
Who thus had summoned me. In weariness,
In painfulness, in perils by the way,
Through awful vigils in the wilderness,
Through storms of trouble, hatred, and reproach,
I followed him; and on his words and ways
My spirit fed.

And as the days went by
I loved my Master more, yet feared him more:
An awful loneliness encircled him,
For in the shadow of the Throne of God
He stood sublime, as in a secret place
Attentive day and night; and unto him
Were no soft words committed, no sweet hopes
And tender signs of promise. He would fain
Have brought at times, as happier Prophets bring,
Some words from God of golden days to come,—
Of a far-off Deliverer,—the Star
That shall arise on this dark world, and shine,
And heal its bitter waters.

Such the words,
Full of celestial sweetness, which he heard
When in his secret vision on the mount,
Heaven spake to him, after the storm and fire
And earthquake, in a still small voice, which crept
Into his very soul, and drew him close,

Close to the Heart of God. Of those high words
He spake to me but once, on a still night
Far in the wilderness, beneath the moon :
He spake of them, and all his mighty soul
Seemed moved at the remembrance, and I saw—
Unwonted guest and sweet !—a smile that stole
To his sad mouth, and something like a tear
Which dimmed the solemn radiance of his glance
A moment only.

“ O my friend,” he said,
“ Never again in those same tender tones
Has Heaven spoken to my heart ; the voice
Was still the voice of God, but low and changed,
And tuned to touch a chord, untouched before
By God or man, in this sad soul of mine.
In that still voice of God a Man drew near,
And sweetly spake to me, a Brother born
For consolation and for peace. Oh, thus
In the gray dawn that broke on Peniel
After the long night-struggle, spake perchance
The Man who strove with Israel, and blessed,
And crowned him victor !

“ When I heard the voice
I drew this heavy mantle like a veil
Across my face, and left the cave, and stood
Before it, waiting. Then God spake to me

As in time past, and named my name, and gave
His high commands, and I obedient heard,
But vainly longed, and vainly evermore
Have longed, and listened, for the still small voice
That moved my heart.

“ When all my course is run,
My Burden lifted, and I lie at peace
Asleep in death, amongst my brethren dead,—
Great men and mighty Prophets, silent all
And satisfied,—oh ! after storms and fire,
Shall I have heard that still small voice once more,
And followed its sweet guidance, to the Halls
Of peace eternal ? ”

Thus my Master spake,
But told me not the words that came to him
In that strange tone ; for they were wonderful
And secret, sent to cheer his lonely heart,
Not to be uttered ;—messages of woe,
Of judgment, and of death were in his mouth
Through all his stormy course, yet in his soul
Compassions dwelt.

And terrible to him
Beyond all words, the awful works at times
Appointed ; for the vengeance which of old
Belonged of right to Heaven alone, was thrust
Into his hands, as on that night of wrath

When Kishon ran blood-red beneath the stars,
And, coldly smiling by the Prophet's side,
Rode Death, triumphant. In our wanderings
My Master shunned that haunted spot, nor saw
Without a shudder under winter suns
The distant brightness of that ancient stream,
Now innocent and clear.

Ah, terrible

To his deep soul, the gathered memories
Of judgments past, the visions dark and wild
Of woes to come ; the Burden of the Lord
Pressed sorer day by day. Men sought his life ;
The Queen had sworn by all her gods to slay
The dark mysterious Prophet, at whose glance
Her spirit shook ; yet still he went and came
Untouched, unmoved, amongst his enemies
When God had need of him ;—and slowly rolled
The heavy years.

At length there came a night,

A solemn night, when we together stood
Beneath a starless sky, and heard the moan
Of Jordan darkly flowing ; and the wind
Brought to our ears the sound of voices strange,
Which woke, and died, and woke again, and cried
Along the hills : and in the clouded skies
Which bent above us we beheld at times

The flashing of a kingly sceptre, held
To this sad Earth of ours ; or was that light
The cold light on a lifted sword ? for still
God is a Man of War ; or were there doors
Which softly for an instant opened, far
In Heaven, and closed again ?

My Master stood
And watched the distant lights that went and came,
And read their lofty meanings one by one ;
And listened to the voices on the hills,
Which woke, and died, and woke again, and cried
Upon the wind. And every sight and sound
That night, to him, spoke peace ; I saw his face
Gathering brightness. I, who lived for him,
And knew his every look,—though some were high
Beyond my highest reading,—through long years
Had rarely seen him smile, for rarely Heaven
Lighted his darkness, though he was to me
Both sun by day and moon by night, my all
Of love and light : I saw him standing now,
Content and smiling, when the rapid gleams
Revealed him to my gaze.

At length he spoke ;
With something like a happy sigh, he named
My name, and at the solemn tenderness
Of his deep tones my spirit failed in me :—

“ O faithful heart, and true,” he said, “ O friend
And brother dear ! my time is close at hand,
And I am ready ; but before I go,
By God’s command, with his most holy oil
Must I anoint thee Prophet in my room.
No more in my poor presence shalt thou stand,
And watch with eager eyes, and minister
With loving hands,—not weary all the day,
Nor all the night, if they can find a work
To do for me,—now in the sight of God,
Thou, watchful, loyal, true, shalt henceforth stand
And serve HIM evermore.”

As in a dream
I heard his voice, and saw his look, and stood
Whilst he with holy oil anointed me,
And named me Prophet in his room,—his room !—
The dream grew sadder. Slowly up the hill
The moon had climbed, she swept the clouds aside
And looked upon us, smiling ; O my God !
How desolate her smile, how cold the sky,
How poor and weak the hand I stretched to Thee
In sudden anguish, yet Thy mighty Hand,
With instant tender pity, answered mine
And held me up.

The faintness from my soul
Passed, and I heard my Master’s voice again,

And marvelled at his sweetness ; grace was
poured
Into his lips, and joy unspeakable ;
His Spring was come, the Wilderness was glad
And blossomed as a rose. He blessed me there,
And drew me from my grief, and I rejoiced
For him alone, forgetting all my loss.

“ My Brother, I have laid the Burden down,
And thou shalt bear it for a time, until
God crowns thee also with such victory
And peace as this, transcending all I dreamed.
Oh, sweet approach of Death ! oh, happy Rest,
That smiling waits me ! Brother, I have longed
At times, and prayed to die, now is the hour
At length at hand ; my dark and stormy course
Is closing swiftly, grief, reproach, and toil
Behind me lie,—thus far has God revealed,—
But where or when those gentle clouds of sleep
Shall sweetly steal upon my wearied eyes,
I know not : He has told me nothing more
As yet, but only this, that Rest is near.”

I, leaning on the Hand outstretched to me,
In that dark hour stood silent, and no cry
Of vain regret and longing, vexed the soul

Which looked so brightly forth, and hailed its
Goal

Thus joyfully at length ; and still he spoke,
With that new gladness on him : “Thou hast
heard,

My Brother, of a day, when I,—a man
Hated and hunted, desolate, alone,—
Fled to the wilderness, and cast myself
Upon the burning sand, and humbly prayed
That I might die ; oh, cool and sweet arose,
In that hot desert, to my thirsty soul
The thought of Death’s cold waters ! yet, more
sweet,

More welcome still to-night, this promised Peace
So near at last.”

But even as he spoke,
A Vision rose before me, far away,
And faint, and dream-like on the desert hills.
Was it the day-spring waking ? Nay, more
fair,

More tender than the dawn, as crystal clear,
This Vision of a light, that rose and smiled
Upon the night ; and quickly, as I gazed,
It changed, and gathered glory : and it grew,
Till with the radiance of celestial fires
The East was blazing.

Then I saw the Sign
And read its meaning : and the Sign was sent
To me alone ; my Master standing by
Wrapped in his happy dreams of Death at hand,
Beheld no glory in the distant sky,—
His visions all were ended, and his place
Already mine.

Then, by the Word of God,
I spake to him—scarce knowing what I said,
And trembling—but I told him of the Sign :
“ My Father ! at the distant gates of God
I see a fiery chariot that waits,
And steeds of fire, and horsemen clad in white
Brighter than suns at noon, and all this pomp,
This glory is for thee. Thou shalt not stoop
To enter by the lowly gates of Death
That kingdom of the Highest ; no soft clouds
Shall veil thine eyes in sleep, whilst angels bear
Thy spirit to its home ; but still awake
As now, with open face devoid of fear,
Upon the whirlwind shalt thou ride, to Him
Who waits to welcome thee.”

I ended here,—
The message given, and the Sign withdrawn,—
And only the great curtains of the night
Swept over us in silence.

For a time

I waited, and my Master had no word
To speak to me ; then slowly, " Is it thus ?"
He said, " is this the will of God indeed ?—
The common lot denied me at the end,
As all the journey through." His voice seemed
strange

And shaken, and the hand he laid on mine
Was cold ; I think he trembled, even he,
Through flesh and spirit, at this knowledge dread
That by no common gates of gentle Death
Familiar long, but waking still, alive
He should go up to God.

He moved away
A little space from me. I watched a while,
Then slept for sorrow,—woke again at dawn,—
And slept. But still my Master prayed.

At length,
When brightly shone the risen sun on all
The distant hills, and on the stream, he came
And touched me, smiling. He had been with
God,
And all the shadows of the night were gone.

A few short days he tarried, golden days
That brought no clouds to him, no tears to me

Though he was going ; for such words he spake
As filled my heart with confidence in God,
And joy beyond all hope.

But now these days
Are ended ; God has taken from my head
My Master, as he said. With all the pomp
And glory of my vision,—steeds of fire,
And angel-horsemen, brighter than the sun,
On either hand,—the burning chariot came
And parted us, and on a mighty wind
He rode to God. And I am left alone,
And by the wailing river I sit down,
I weep when I remember him.

And yet
Am I aware, since he was taken hence,
Of a new spirit moving in my breast,
A spirit strong and free, that wakes and sleeps,
In this weak soul of mine, a stranger still
And sojourner with me, but one that shall
Abide for many days,—a promised guest,—
The spirit of my Master !

When I stood,
After he left me, on the other side
Of Jordan, what a little thing it seemed
To smite the waters, and to bid them rise
On either hand a crystal wall, that I

Might cross the flood on foot ; I know that then
The spirit of Elijah woke in me :
His mantle wraps me—dark before me lies
A stormy course like his ; but God, his God
And mine, shall hold me also to the End.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

MADEIRA, *March 1878.*



ONCE more upon the beach I stand,
And watch the moonlight on the sea ;
And Memory takes me by the hand,
And bids me welcome tenderly.

She leads me slowly up the street,
And sweetly speaks of other days :
How soft and musical her feet
As thus she treads familiar ways !

Old lights upon the pathway gleam—
A magic spell is round me cast ;
I move as in a golden dream
Through visions of the radiant Past.

For this was Paradise to me—
My childhood's happy Wonderland,—
When all the shadows that should be
Were hidden by an angel's hand ;

When a new earth and heaven were spread
Each day before my joyful eyes,
And every night above my head
Fresh stars were sparkling in the skies.

And now the vanished hours return,
And all things are made fair and new ;
I see the East begin to burn—
I feel the coolness of the dew.

For softly in my willing ear
Sweet Memory is whisp'ring low
Remembered names I love to hear,
And tender dreams of long ago.

Until at length a silence falls :
The magic voice has passed and died—
The moon shines cold upon the walls—
The empty street is bare and wide.

And the fair Spirit of the Past
Has fled, and leaves me blind indeed ;
For all along the way are cast
Sweet tokens which I cannot read.

In her soft grasp she holdeth still
The golden keys of old, bright days—

The stories of the dale and hill,
The meanings of familiar ways.

She will not walk again with me,
And tell me all I long to hear,
As when I landed from the sea,
And her first tones were in my ear.

But yet in many a secret place
I hear her harp amongst the trees ;
Or catch the shining of her face
At sunset on remembered seas.

By half-forgotten doors she stands,
And whispers sudden words to me ;
And leads me with mysterious hands
To where my buried treasures be.

She waits at corners of the street ;
She meets me smiling at the well :
Part of her message is most sweet,
But part she keeps and will not tell.

And thus she charms me on my way
To seek fresh treasures at her shrine ;
And I am richer day by day
In this recovered wealth of mine.

Yet some there are who weep to hear
The tender harp of Memory ;
They dread her visions soft and clear
Of their lost dawn upon the sea.

They say that, in her fairest bowers,
Sad are the winds that sweetly blow,—
Like fragrant breaths of orange flowers
To one whose bride died long ago.

Not thus for me the vanished dawn
Returns to gild this smiling shore ;
The angels of my childhood gone
Have kept their word to me, and more.

The beauty of the perfect day
Excels the promise of its spring ;
And still each hour along the way
Fresh angels meet me on the wing.

The water changes into wine,
At noonday, in the cup I hold ;
And Sorrow, with her touch divine,
Has turned my silver into gold.

For though some dear ones God had lent
Have passed to Him across the sea,

Their shining footsteps as they went
Have opened doors in heaven for me.

And such new light from God has streamed,
That, even by my loss, I stand
For ever richer than I dreamed
In the old, happy Wonderland.

And thus may every step disclose
New treasures, as I journey on,
Till clear upon my spirit glows
A sunset fairer than the dawn.

And when, in some mysterious place,
The cool night-shadows softly fall,
Oh, let me say, by God's sweet grace,
This solemn hour is best of all !

TO JESUS BY NIGHT.



HE came by night : the careless city slept,
And sleeping dreamed, but dreamed not that
her King

Was in the midst of her ; the shadows swept
From hill to hill, the moon rode cold and still
Beyond the shifting clouds ; the Kidron moaned
Beneath the city walls, and could not rest,
Troubling the sad heart of the night with sound
Of vague reproach and menace. Then a wind
Mysterious and fitful, from the hills
Broke suddenly, and seemed to drive the moon,
Pale in her cloudy chariot, across
The sky, with all her trembling stars. Below
The light and darkness fought along the streets

He left the warmth and brightness of his home,
The soft familiar voices of his life,
And came at one quick step into the heart,
The sad heart, of this troubled night ; he heard

That moaning underneath the city walls
Which none can stay, he met the fitful wind
Down the deserted street, and was aware
Of terrible shadows fighting everywhere
With cold lights from the sky that fell, to pierce
And scatter them. The sorrow of the night
Answered his sorrow ; for within his breast
A deeper trouble moved, another Wind,
Mysterious and awful, on his soul
Was blowing as it listed.

Swiftly on

From silent street to street he passed, intent
On his high quest ; led by the fame of One
Whom God had surely sent to teach, and shine,
And lighten all the darkness of the world.
At length he found the lowly place and poor
Where this new Master dwelt, a sojourner
And stranger in the city. At the door
He paused a moment, and the moon looked forth
Smiling upon him, as the fitful wind
Went down the street once more. But in his
soul

The night was at its darkest,—Dayspring near,—
And storms of doubt assailed him, and the fear
That coming thus beneath the veil of night.
Ashamed, to seek the Master, He, ashamed

Of such a seeker, might refuse to hear
And answer him.

With tremblings in the night
He stood and knocked. Around him everywhere
The people slept, in every silent house
The toilers' hands lay folded, weary hearts
Were taking rest in golden dreams ; but He,
More weary than the weariest, worn with grief,
And travel, and reproach, and zeal for God
Which wasted Him like fire, kept watch by night
And would not rest ; lest even in the night
Some trembling soul should seek His door, and
find

The Master sleeping.

Had He heard indeed,
With the quick ear of one who waits to save,
Those footsteps drawing near, the secret tread
Of one who came to seek Him underneath
The wings of night, ashamed, yet unto Him
Coming, and not to be in any wise
Denied ? For straightway He arose, and wide
Opened the door of welcome. Thus, oh thus,
Awake, and watching for His wanderers
Who, trembling, steal to Him by night, men
find

The Master now.

Come boldly unto Him,
What time He passes down the crowded street,
Beneath the noon-day sun, and cry aloud,
Not heeding all the throng ; then see Him
pause

To smile upon thy prayer, and joyful take
His sweet and ready answer. Yet, O friend!
Remember in the sunshine of thy joy,
In the clear shining of His lifted face,
That there are those who come to Him by
night,

In loneliness and anguish, faint with fear,
By sinful doubt tormented,—unto whom
His tender heart is open,—coming thus,
Yea even thus by night, in doubt and fear,
To seek the gracious shelter of His roof,
If haply they may find it ere they die,—
They shall not be denied.

And there are last
That shall be first. Behold ! another hour,
And power of darkness ; now the Light Himself
Of all the dreary world is quenched in death,
And through the shadow infinite there breaks
No smile Divine. Betrayed, despised, and
dead,

The Master hangs upon the bitter tree,

Forsaken by His own ; but one draws near
To claim Him undismayed, the man who came
Beneath the wings of night, ashamed, afraid,
To seek Him once. Now, not ashamed of
Him,

Not trembling nor afraid, he comes again
In presence of His enemies, to One
Who cannot greet him,—for the tender hand
That welcomed him by night is wounded now
And cold ; the heart so quickly touched and
stirred

To pity infinite, has ceased to beat,—
And wrapped in the dull heaviness of death,
The Master hangs forsaken.

And *he* comes
To claim Him, undismayed.

This empty night
Grows rich and beautiful with love untold,
And sweet with odours from the hills of myrrh,
As, tenderly, is carried to Its rest
The sacred Body broken for our sins,
To lie till dawn. O blessed hands that bear
This holy Burden,—precious and beloved
Beyond all thought on earth, yet desolate,
Forsaken by His own ;—for there are first
That shall be last.

And thus by night, by night,
 Yet not ashamed,—ah ! nevermore ashamed,—
 He came to Jesus, bringing costly gifts
 As to a king, for burial ; lavishing
 His best and sweetest at the Master's feet
 In presence of His foes.

* * * *

Once more by night
 He went to Jesus, — through that still dark
 night
 Of death, which waits us all.

For, one by one,

We rise and quit the happy table, spread
 With countless blessings, and we leave behind
 The warmth and brightness of our home, the
 dear
 Familiar voices of our earthly life,
 And pass, at one quick step, into the heart,
 The sad heart, of that night unknown,—we feel
 The chill wind from the valley creep, and hear
 The River moan and menace us, with sound
 Of woe and change.

Yet see, dear friends, O see !

How brief this darkness !— but one faltering
 step
 Into the night,—and then the Master's door

Set wide in joyful welcome, light and love
Smiling upon us, radiant far beyond
Our brightest dreams ; and more than all, the
 Hand
Once wounded, stretched to draw us from the
 night
For ever, to the Home of cloudless day.

DEAD AT THE GOAL.

Suggested by the old legend that one of the Crusaders died of joy
on his first sight of Jerusalem.



HE sailed across the glittering seas that swept
In music toward the East ;
Far off, along the shore, the nations wept—
People, and king, and priest :

For every land was heavy with the grief
That one fair City bore ;
And half the world was gone to her relief.
Half wept upon the shore.

He heard that sound of anger and of tears,
And in his steadfast eye
Desire to right the bitter wrong of years
Shone yet more stern and high.

And nearer every day the sunrise glowed,
And filled his heart with fire,

Still wooing him swiftly onward, till it showed
The land of his desire.

He touched the shore, he knelt with tears at length
To kiss that sacred strand ;
Then rose to seek, clothed in a solemn strength,
The City of the land.

Across the pale low hills he took his way,
By ruined tower and tomb,
Across the Plains of Sharon, where to-day
The rose forgets to bloom ;

Till, at the lighting of the evening fires
Along the western sky,
He saw the promised home of his desires
In royal beauty lie.

O City, sorrowful, yet full of grace !
The sinking sun adorns
With a celestial smile thine altered face
Beneath its crown of thorns ;

The heavy storms of rage and sorrow beat
About thy sacred heart ;
Thou hast a deadly wound, yet strangely sweet
And beautiful thou art ;

So sweet, that thou hast drawn, from coldest lands
 Beyond the western sea,
Hearts burning for thy wrongs, and eager hands
 To fight for God and thee.

Lift up thy head,—thou sittest faint and fair,
 This sunset on thy brow,—
And see with what an ecstasy of prayer
 Thy true knight greets thee now.

Smile on his passionate joy, his radiant face,
 His consecrated sword,
In one bright moment let thy matchless grace
 Give him his full reward :—

For, as his heart beats wildly at its goal,
 With every hope fulfilled,—
Suddenly shivered is the golden bowl,
 The bounding pulse is stilled !

And, dead, he falls before thy shining feet,
 Pierced by the fatal dart
Of joy too keen, triumphant love too sweet
 For an imprisoned heart.

Dead at the goal ! serene and satisfied,
 With never cry nor moan ;

Dead ! with the exulting smile of one who died
Of joy and love alone.

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And we have seen, on many a Pilgrim's face,
This rapture at the Goal,
This joy in death, which comes by God's dear grace
To the departing soul.

These, too, had travelled by a weary road,
Till, as the end drew nigh,
They saw the Holy City, God's abode,
Smile in the eastern sky ;

Then shone her battlements of crystal clear,
Lit by celestial fires ;
Then, gloriously, the King Himself drew near,
Exceeding all desires ;

And at this Vision, heavenly and fair,
And pure without alloy,
This infinite answer to a life-long prayer,
They, too, have died of joy.

IN THE HOUSE OF GOD.

These lines are founded on the introduction to a sermon preached by the Ven. the Archdeacon of Totnes, October 8, 1879. The text was taken from the Sermon on the Mount.



WE do as thou hast said. We hush the sound
Of restless voices, in these busy hearts
Rising and calling ever, like the waves
On some mysterious sea that cannot sleep ;
And for a time we will refuse to hear
In the dark world without, the heavy sound
Of War and Change, the voices far and near
Of sorrow unto sorrow answering
From shore to shore.

We will be still this night
Before the Lord, and deaf to every sound,
Till,—through the dull mist of the rolling years,—
We hear His Voice.

Then, as the curtains rise,
And all things present fade and fall from us,
By God's sweet grace, our opened eyes behold

The very Form of Him who speaks ;—a Man
By every outward sign and token made
So like unto His brethren, that at times
The God within passed by, and was not known.
We see Him standing on the mountain-side,
Serene and pale, amongst His fellow-men ;
About His sacred feet the lilies shine,
By their still beauty serving Him ; above
In the clear air are wings and songs, of birds
That joyful praise Him.

Tenderly He speaks,
And speaks to *us*, across the mist of years ;
His Voice is on that low soft wind that blows
From Galilee, to touch our hearts this night,
And heal our sorrows ; for He bids us trust
And fear no want for ever ;—raiment ? food ?—
Our Father knoweth we have need of these ;
His tender hand has clothed the flowers that blow
But for a day ; He feeds the birds that sing
And fly to Him, and have no earthly store :
Can He forget the children's daily bread ?

And thus He speaks, who had Himself no store
Nor treasure-house on earth, but day by day
Leant only upon God. He had not where
To lay His weary head ; He braved for us

Sorrow and hunger, toil, reproach, and care ;
He knew not taste of dainty food, nor touch
Of soft luxurious raiment ;—for He passed
Through hard and bitter years, unfaltering,
Content to do the Father's will, and trust
Even to the uttermost.

Ah ! thus He won,

Not otherwise, this strange authority
With which He speaks, and stills our restless care.
For when He, smiling, bids us smile, and take
No sad thought for the morrow, who can say,—
He, being God, and seated far beyond
The touch of want and care, in that soft calm
Of His unclouded Noon, speaks thus to us
And knows not what He says? He cannot dream
How chill the shadow falls of coming woe,
Nor how To-morrow looks beneath the skies,
When grief is following grief :—ah no ! for thus
He speaks, *He* speaks, whose solemn right it is.
He bore beneath these heavy skies the weight
Of all the sinful world ; a Man of griefs
And cares untold ; before whose steadfast gaze
The dread To-morrow of His Passion shone
With menace infinite.

Thus Captain, King

Of all who suffer, He is with us now,—

A Man amongst His fellows,—pleading low
 That, even as He trusted utterly,
 In life and death, the Father's perfect care,
 We too this night should lean our souls on HIM,
 And know no fear.

* * * * *

The curtains slowly fall,
 The words are ended ; with a sigh we pass
 Into the present world, and to the stir
 Of common life and thought. But unto us,
 Even to us this night, through mists of years,
 Has come the Voice of Jesus : as of old,
 He does not strive nor cry, nor cause His words
 To echo down the busy streets, and drown
 The voices of the world, but secretly
 He speaketh to His own. Oh, low and sweet,
 Like dew upon the tender grass, this night
 His speech hath fallen upon us.

Forth we go,
 Leaving the brightness of His House behind,—
 But these faint hearts have gathered strength, to
 face

The brief to-morrow of this changing life,
 With all its possibilities of woe ;
 And that To-morrow, infinite, untold,
 Which lies beyond the night of death, and waits

To take us all. We will not faint nor fear,
But, like to Him who spake to us this night,
We, too, will trust the Father utterly,
For life and death ; and fear no want nor woe,
Since He is with us, and His boundless love
Embraceth us for ever.

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

In her last letter to me, received May 16, 1879, when she stood already, so unconsciously, on the Threshold of the everlasting Rest, she wrote: "I have no respite: I *must* make a little lull in life."



HE stood in the glorious shadow
Of the Father's House of Love,
But she saw not the shining Threshold
Where the Angel-Watchmen move ;
She heard not their garments faintly stir
As they opened the golden gates for her.

She had toiled in the blessed Vineyard,
And as she toiled she sang,
Till far through the sunny distance
That sweetest music rang ;
And her fellow-workers, far and near,
Gave thanks to God for her words of cheer.

We heard her sing in the dawning,
When the mists were low and chill ;

In the heavy heat of the noon-tide
Her clear voice cheered us still ;
And when evening shadows were closing round,
We folded our hands to that tender sound.

And those who were watching at midnight,—
Watching in pain or fear,—
Heard oft in the sorrowful stillness
That sweet voice ringing clear ;
For God her Maker, her Lord and King,
Had given her songs in the night to sing.

And the souls that were passing in silence
To the River dreary and dim,
Heard, down by its desolate margin,
A sweet voice sing of Him
Who will welcome His children, one by one,
To the smiling City beyond the sun.

Far off on the Desert-mountains
To wandering souls it came,
That sound of a tender message,—
That pleading in Christ's dear Name,—
It followed the sorrowful path they trod,
Till the wandering spirits were turned to God.

And she sang to the little children
Of the children's God and King ;
When heart and voice were weary,
She sang, unfaltering ;
And her fervent spirit leapt, to see
The little ones gather, sweet Lord, to Thee.

But at length she longed for a "respite,"
To gather in silence alone
New strength for her mighty harvest,
For the great work yet to be done,—
She prayed for a lull in the labour of life,
A breathing-space in the glorious strife ;—

For only a little shadow
From the red sun's fiery glow,
A brief hour's rest by the Fountains
Where the waters of comfort flow,
Where the flowers are blowing, so pale and sweet,
In the tender gloom by the Master's feet.

Yet,—could she have rested ever
Where the cool soft shadows lie,
Whilst, weary and faint in the noon-tide,
One soul went wandering by ?—

Nay ; one sad step on the dreary road
Would have troubled her heart as it leant on God :

So willing to toil and travel,
 To suffer and watch for all,
So near in heart to the Master,
 So eager to follow His call,—
She spent her soul in the service sweet,
And only in Death could rest at His feet.

So *this* is the needed respite ;—
 The shadow from noon-day sun
Falls dark from the wings of the Angel
 Who comes when our work is done,
To bring no “lull” in the hurry of life,
But the conqueror’s rest after toil and strife.

And now in the King’s own Palace
 She sings to her harp of gold,
With the seal of God on her forehead,
 In her spirit His peace untold,
Where never a sorrowful step nor cry
Shall break on the Lull of Eternity.

AT DAWN OF DAY.



IN this cold sweetness of the dawn
I wake and watch to see,
The solemn curtains slowly drawn
Of the day that is to be

A speechless calm is on my heart,
A silence in my soul,
As one by one the shades depart
And the lights onward roll.

The birds are stirring in the trees,
And singing low and clear,
And the brook murmurs to the breeze
A message for my ear.

Thus visits me, and not in vain,
The morning undefiled,
Into my tired breast steals again
The pure heart of a child.

O sweetest hour ! not night nor day,
Not wholly dark nor light ;
O tender touch of twilight gray
Along the skirts of night !

Now close at hand within the veil
Hope, waking, sings to me
A song of shadows in the dale
And sun upon the sea ;

Of morning stars that linger still
In heavens cold and gray,
Whilst the red clouds upon the hill
Lead up the golden day.

O might there come as sweet a Dawn
After my night of death !—
As fair a Dayspring, stealing on
With soft and even breath !—

No burst of glory that should shake
And stun my startled soul,
But a tender Dawn on a heart awake,
And safe at the long-sought Goal.

Might I but lie in my low bed
And dream of the day to be
Whilst one sweet angel at my head
Would sit and sing to me ;

One angel singing, where I lie
Betwixt the dawn and day,
A song of the Sun that draweth nigh
Upon the mountains gray ;

A speechless calm upon my heart,
A silence in my soul,
As one by one the shades depart
And the lights onward roll ;

Low would I lie, and know no fear,
My head upon the sod,
Waiting to see the shadows clear
From the fair Face of God.

O sweetest hour ! not night nor day,
Not wholly dark nor light ;
O tender touch of twilight gray
On the skirts of my last night !

Let me not miss that perfect calm,
Those stars upon the hill,
The sound of Hope's mysterious psalm
When heaven and earth are still :—

Then would I see the curtains drawn,
The shadows driven away,
Whilst God's great angels of the Dawn
Lead up the golden Day !

DESOLATE.

“ And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim.
Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.” *



Edwelt together, by the grace of God,
Through golden years of sunshine. Day by
day

In raiment white as snow she walked with
me,

And daily grew more dear. Oh, sweet to us,
Beyond all word or dream, that mutual life
Which God had given us richly to enjoy,
Its happy labours,—blessèd rests between,—
Summer and Winter, Spring-time and the joy
Of Harvest Home.

Yet even then, I knew
That far above, beyond my duller sight,
Her hope was centred ; every lovely gift
That graced our home on earth, was unto her
A shadow and example of the things

* This verse is used only as a motto, and the poem bears no reference to the history of Michal.

Prepared in Heaven. Brighter glowed her trust,
More spiritual and still more fair her hope,
As each fresh blessing from our Father's hand
Fell softly, crowning us. If thus, she said,
Beyond all thought or promise, this brief life
Grew dear and wonderful, what must it be
To dwell within the City, fair and still,
Which shall be ours for ever?

Grief or care
Had scarcely touched her—in our sheltered home
She knew no sorrow ; Peace and Charity
Dwelt sweetly where she dwelt, and Joy became
A frequent guest, and loved to sit with her
And make her sing. Yet pitiful she was
To all who suffered, measuring loss and woe
By the large measure of her own deep heart,
And by the vastness of its treasure. Thus
Even through joy she knew the secret pang
Of sorrow ; and through riches, poverty,
And loss by gain.

And day by day she sought
The stricken homes, beside whose desolate
And silent hearths sat Want, or Pain, or Death,—
Those terrible guests who ask for no man's leave,
But lift the latch, and enter, and sit down ;—
There came she, as an angel, with the cup

Of consolation in her tender hand,
And ministered, with tears of sympathy,
To every mourning spirit.

Golden years
Of service and of hope swept over us
Thus sweetly. Brighter grew our home, more
dear

Our daily life together ; God Himself
Shone on us, making all we took in hand
To grow and prosper. And as time went by
He daily joined our hearts more perfectly,
And made us one.

Until there came a day,—
A day to me of heaviness and woe
Beyond repair,—when He who thus had blessed
And bound us to each other, soul to soul,
Divided us. He claimed His awful right
To put asunder those whom He had joined.
His sword is powerful, quick and keen to pierce,
Dividing even soul and spirit, joints
And marrow, living heart and heart entwined
In holy wedlock. Who can bid it stay,
Or say, “Put up thyself, O Sword of God,
Return into thy scabbard, rest, be still,
Here is no place for thee.” How can it rest
When God hath given it a charge?

It fell

Upon a glorious day in Harvest-time,—
When, under smiling skies, the golden grain
Was carried home with singing,—that a word
Was brought unto my love ; the King Himself
Desired her presence—He would have her leave
Her home, and all she had, and go to Him.
Ah ! oftentimes, in peaceful evening hours,
When we together sat, to see the sun
Sink smiling toward the sea, my love had said,—
“ How sweet if, by the pitying grace of God,
The sun at length upon us both might set,
And we together pass into the Dawn
Of His celestial Day ! oh, hand in hand,
To leave the sweetness of our earthly home
For one prepared above ; together still
To enter by the Gate, to see the King,
And with one heart to taste the cup of joy
Which He has mingled.”

This her tender dream
Was crossed by Heaven, for she was called alone.
She heard the message, kissed the token sent,
And rose up, pale but smiling, to depart
With those who came to seek her. Yet to me
She stretched her hands, and bade me lead her
forth

A little way upon this journey strange
And solemn. "Come with me," she said, "O come
As far, along that shadowy road,—as far
As any step of mortal man may go
And yet return."

Then slowly forth we went,
Hand locked in hand. We left behind the stir
Of common sounds, we passed into the waste
And solitary space that girdles round
Our daily life ; a shadowy path we found,
And followed but a little way, when, lo !
Before us suddenly upon the hills,
More glorious than the sun, the City shone
With open gates of welcome, and I saw
The answering brightness on my dear one's face,
Whilst darkness covered mine.

The Messengers
Sent by the King had lingered,—pitying
My speechless grief,—behind us by the way ;
But now they came to us, and tenderly
Withdrew her little clinging hand from mine,
And gently hastened her, the King's command
Being urgent.

Then my love before me went,
With glad, swift steps ascending, and bright face
Set steadfastly toward Jerusalem ;

Yet in her joy she still remembered me,
And paused and turned, and sought by sweetest signs
And looks to cheer me, as I, broken, went
Behind her weeping. Till the Messengers
Drew near again, and touched me, saying low,
In heavenly voices, soft with pity,—“Go,
Return. Thou mayest not follow, yet uncalled,
These happy footsteps to the City gates
And to the Presence of the King. Behold !
Already she is passing from thy gaze—
A bright cloud overshadows her—she goes
Into the Glory which no man shall see
And live ; and we attend her. Go, return.”

And I returned. To this bare home of mine
Where all is changed and dim, and every flower
Has withered in its place, and every sound
Is charged with sorrow, I returned alone
And desolate for ever. Nights and days
Swept over me ; I saw no sun nor stars,
But sat in equal darkness at noon-day
And midnight, for my light was gone from me.
And strange it seemed to think that far away
In the celestial City, where they know
No night nor shadow, she in Glory dwelt
Whilst darkness covered me.

Yet light was sown

Even for me, around my ruined home,
And in a little while began to spring :
The seed my love had scattered far and free
Beside all waters, now returned to me
In blessings manifold ; the poor and sad
Whom she had visited and cheered and fed
Prayed day and night for me ; until the LOVE
That once had seemed so distant—seated far
Above the Heavens—came down and dwelt with
me,
Familiar, patient, in this lonely place.

And I grow patient, too, and am content
With bare, still days of Winter, softly lit
By memories of golden Summer flown,
And hope of perfect Summer yet to come
Which shall restore my treasure. Day by day
I seek to follow her, and everywhere,—
In homes of sorrow, in the place of prayer,
Or in the wide, white Harvest-field,—I find
And kiss her blessed footprints.

Far behind,

Ah ! far behind her,—weeping still at times,
Yet comforted,—I press toward the Hills
Where, crowned with joy, my love is waiting me.

On the bright threshold of eternal Peace
Mine eyes shall see her standing, pure as snow
And radiant as the dawn, to welcome me.
Oh, but to picture that first look, the smile
With which she will receive me, makes my heart
Grow faint with joy and wonder.

As a child

At Home, familiar in the Father's House,
She, smiling still, will lead me to His feet,
And I, too, shall behold Him face to Face
Whom, not having seen, I love. There shall we
taste,

As with one heart, that cup of infinite joy
Which He hath mingled; for the King shall shine
Upon us gloriously, and make us one.
And in the days that follow—golden days,
Celestial still and clear—she shall be mine,—
Oh, once again mine own, for ever mine,—
Spirit to spirit bound in deathless love
Beneath the shadow of the Throne of God.

ON HIS THRESHOLD.

"I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God."



NLY to stand on the Threshold
Of the holy and beautiful home,
To hear the rush of the music
Under the crystal dome,
When the radiant saints and the angels
Are standing to bless the King,
And the glorious tones of their anthem
Through all the gateways ring.

Or to hear in the heavenly silence,
Silence as sweet as song,
The still small voice that floweth
The golden streets along;
The voice of Him that liveth,
And once was dead for me,
The voice that in old time sounded
By the waves of Galilee.

Only to stand on the Threshold,
 Though I see not the Master's face :
At the gate of His holy Palace
 To have my name and my place ;
From my post I shall never wander,
 At my watch I shall never sleep,
And my heart shall sing for gladness
 At the door I am set to keep.

Only to see them bringing
 The ransomed people home,
With voice of joy and triumph,
 Never again to roam ;
To bid them welcome joyful
 From all the weary lands,
To the shelter and the sweetness
 Of the house not made with hands.

Only to hear the greetings
 Of the spirits robed in white,
When those who parted in darkness
 Are met again in the light ;
And sing, for the tender rapture
 Of loved ones sheltered there,
The sweetest songs of heaven
 To the Master's loving care.

He knows the light and the darkness,
The gladness of love, and the pain,
For His own heart glows in the sunlight
That shineth after rain ;
And ever His joy grows deeper,
And ever His smile more bright,
When those who parted in darkness
Are met again in the light.

Only to see, when the twilight
Has gathered beneath my feet,
That the falling stars are the angels
Going down to the shadowy street ;
Going down to smooth the pathways
That weary feet have trod ;
And to kiss the sleeping children,
And give them dreams of God.

Only to stand on the Threshold !
Ah, this were heaven to me,
After the dreary desert,
After the wintry sea ;
But I hear Him call me higher,
In accents low and sweet,—
I shall not stand on the Threshold,
But sit at the Master's feet.

ASLEEP ON A PILLOW.



INIGHT upon the sea,—black waves that
rock

And toss in their rough arms a helpless bark,
Now lifting it high up to the sullen gates
Of stormy heaven, now drawing it swiftly
down

Into the awful caverns of the sea.

And still the tempest grows ; till men are pale
Who oft on angry seas have heard, unmoved,
Deep calling unto deep.

Yet in the boat

One Man sleeps sweetly, like a child at rest
Upon his mother's knee,—above His head
The thundering skies, and underneath wild waves,
Cruel and urgent to devour their prey,—
Heedless of wind and thunder low He lies,
Escaped into that shadowy kingdom, where
The weariest soul may lay its burden down,
And find a narrow space of rest prepared

On the appointed path from woe to woe.
The Angel of that dim, mysterious land
Never so sweet a captive held in chains,
And never one so weary ; kneeling low
Before his Prisoner, he strengthens still
Each gentle cord, and binds Him closer yet,
That He who came to give men rest may rest
Himself a little space.

Ah ! who can tell
What passes in that sacred Temple, sealed
From every wistful gaze ? the door is closed,
The windows darkened, and no voice replies
To the angry summons of the sea and sky.
Yet are there none to visit Him ? Behold !—
The solemn spaces of the night are thronged
By bands of tender dreams, that come and go
Over the land and sea ; they glide at will
Through all the dim, strange realms of men asleep,
And visit every soul ; but will they dare
To enter Here ? or must they stand spell-bound
Upon this stainless Threshold ? Can they pass
With pure and reverent footsteps to the Shrine,
And offer visions there, showing the King,
Uncrowned and sorrowful, His coming joy
Which God before Him set ? With shadowy hands
Dropping celestial flowers of paradise,

Do the dreams lead Him up the golden stairs,
That He may walk in heaven, unoppressed
By this strange vesture of our flesh and blood
Which weighs upon His waking hours? and there
Does He behold, as in a glass, His Church,
Redeemed, complete, and radiant like a Bride
Made ready for her Lord?

Our hearts may ask,
But who shall answer? Still the questions rise,
As, reverent, we kneel around, and watch
This mighty Sleeper.

Do the visions shine
Within His tender memory, of scenes
In His dear earthly home at Nazareth,—
Of fragrant hours by moonlight, at the well,
Of the first brightness of His mother's smile
Before the haunting shadow of the Cross
Had dimmed its radiance?

Kneeling at His feet,
In this unanswering silence of His soul,
Our hearts must be content to wonder much,
And more to love. Yet, should the Watchman
sleep

When danger threatens His appointed charge?
Does the Good Shepherd sleep, when night is full
Of menace and alarm? Still wilder grows

The tempest ; and the black waves louder roar,
And shake in their fierce grasp the feeble bark
With all the living souls they would devour ;—
Until at length, in deadly fear, the men
Fall at the Master's feet and call His name.

And, lo ! that heavy slumber, which no voice
Of terrible thunder rolling through the skies,
No sound of many waters in His ear,
Had any power to trouble or to stir,
Is broken on the instant.

In that storm,

No man could hear his own cry on the wind,
But to the heart of Christ it pierced ; He heard,
And casting off the chains of sleep, He rose
And bound with them the waters and the wind.

SENT FOR ALONE.



HE mother heard the summons,
The low and tender tone,
Of Love that long has waited,
And comes to claim its own ;
The Love that calleth sweetly,
Betwixt the dawn and day :
“ The night is gone, beloved ;
Rise up, and come away !

“ Rise up, and leave behind thee,
Sorrow and sin and care ;
The rain is past and over,
The flowers are blowing fair.
Now is the dawn of heaven,
Thy sweet hour of release ;
Lay down the heavy burden,
And enter into peace.”

Before the solemn gateway
Of the eternal Rest,
The mother stood at sunrise—
A child upon her breast ;
Her warfare almost ended,
The City all but won,
And on her face the dawning
Of an unfading Sun.

‘ I heard Thee call my spirit,
And here am I, dear Lord ;
Now let Thy servant see Thee,
According to Thy word :
The long hope of my journey
Is changing into sight,
As the stars grow faint above me
Before the morning light.

“ I leave my golden treasures
To Thy protecting arm :
Let no man hurt my dear ones,
No sorrow work them harm ;
Till, in some glorious morning,
Thou countest them to me—
Each one made pure and stainless,
And loved and crowned by Thee !

“ But one I fain would bring Thee,
This day, upon my breast—
Too tender for the journey,
Lord, take her to Thy Rest.
Oh, let me bear her smiling,
Along Thy golden street,
To lay her on Thy bosom,
In mother’s rapture sweet ! ”

The angels of the gateway
Bent softly to the child,
And stretched glad hands to take her
To the Kingdom undefiled.
But He who died for the children
Bade all the angels wait ;—
And still the mother pleaded
Before the heavenly gate :—

“ Twice, in most bitter anguish,
At Thine entreating word,
The children from my bosom
I gave to Thee, dear Lord.
Now let me bring, with singing,
The last and fairest flower,
On which no tears have fallen,
To grace Thy sacred bower ! ”

But who may tell the answer
From sweetest lips, that fell—
Denying the soft petition,
But whispering, All is well !
The sun rose on the city—
The sun on the mother's breast ;
Alone, and yet exulting,
She entered into Rest.

M O S E S.



Y work is ended now, the Desert life
Here finds its solemn close, and forty years
Of walking in the Wilderness are gone
Like flying visions of a troubled night.
Now on the threshold of the promised Rest
I stand, with all my people, ready clad
For conquest, eager to possess the Land—
The good and pleasant Land, that smiling lies
In God's sweet keeping, just beyond our sight
The dreary journey ended, Rest at hand,—
Oh, happy people ! pausing now to dream,
Beside the River, of the joys to be,
Of victory and peace.

For forty years
Ye have been weary in the Wilderness,
Suffered to hunger, robbed by death, and spoiled,
And wasted for your sins, afflicted, tossed,
Uncomforted ; now is your comfort near,
The cup of consolation to your lips

God sweetly raises. Drink, O friends, yea,
drink

Abundantly, and let your souls forget
Their weariness and grief.

Yet through those years
No sorrow in the Camp was ever like
Unto my sorrow; for the stormy Host
Was as the changing sea which cannot rest,
And rose at every Desert-wind, and moaned,
And blindly dashed itself against the Lord
And Moses. In my single breast I bore
Those strivings of the people all the way,
Trouble by night, and at the break of day
Trouble, reproach, and anguish everywhere:
And not a man, save Aaron, stood by me,—
Mine Aaron, saint of God, and brother born
To share my burden.

Heavy was the weight,
And long the journey to the promised Rest,—
And now, my hope betrays me at the goal.
The dream that led me through the Wilderness,
The vision of a Country dear to God,
And sweet beyond all words of earthly song,
Or hope of heart, or prayer, deserts me now;
And desolate I stand, although so near
To all I long for.

Soon the tribes shall rise
To cross the River, and shall go from strength
To strength victorious, till the Land is won.
And every tribe shall have its portion there,
And every soul shall see its dream fulfilled,
And sweetly dwell beneath the wings of God
Content at last.

But through the length and breadth
Of all the smiling Country shall be found
No place for me to dwell, no quiet home
Where I might rest my Desert-wearied soul;
Where, after toil and anguish, I might sit
And dream a while in golden evening hours,
Beneath my pleasant vine, and see the sun
Go down in peace, and think of sorrows gone,
Of weary walkings in the Wilderness,
Of murmurs and reproaches, stilled at last
Because not one good word has failed of all
Which God had promised. There my soul would
sing

At eventide, and find her rest in God,
And taste the sweetness of desire fulfilled.
But this shall never be, the Mount of Death
Throws its dark shadow on me, and this day,
Before the Camp awakes, I must begin
My solemn, silent journey up to God.

For I am called alone, once more alone,
To meet with Him, in mountain solitudes
Where none may go unbidden.

In this shade

My troubled soul has dwelt for many days,
Yet have I spoken all the words of God
As He commanded, till the work is done,
And I am free to go, ah God ! how free,—
The Desert-journey ended, and for me
No Promised Land reserved. How free to go,—
For Miriam is gone, and Aaron gone,
And wife and children in the Wilderness
Are perished ; and the hosts that came with me
From Egypt, all are lying low this day,
A sleeping army under Desert-sand,
Save two men only. And a stranger host
Is grown beneath my hand to fill the Camp,
And to inherit all the promises
Of victory and rest.

But yesterday

At sunset, when the glow was on the hills,
And all the land was silent, far and near
The people stood before their tents, to hear
My parting message ere I die. I rose
And spake the words of my last Song to them,
And blessed the happy people, tribe by tribe,

As if the heavy hand of God had been
But lightly laid on me, as if I stood,—
I, too,—on the bright Threshold of our dream
Fulfilled.

Yet all the while upon my head
The shadow of the Mountain dwelt, and on
My soul a deeper shade.

The people stood
With garments shining in the level sun,
Rank upon rank before me, valiant men
All nurtured in the Wilderness, and wild
And changeful as the sudden winds that blow
Amongst the Desert-hills, yet dear to God.
And through the mighty host my spirit felt
One great heart beat, one wave of solemn strength
Rose as I spoke and lifted every soul
To some new height of courage. For the men
Are strong of heart and eager for the fight ;
And,—now the happy Country is at hand,—
Above each tent the banner gleams afresh
Of Love and Promise, every soul is blessed
With golden dews of hope, the Wilderness
Forgotten lies, and every heart goes forth
To taste the sweetness of its heritage ;—
Save mine alone, which has no lot nor part
In all the Land.

Yet shall I see this day,
This very day before I die, the Rest
Prepared for us—shall see it clear and fair
Beyond the River, smiling in the sun—
But shall not enter there. Alas, my God !
Must this sad heart be sadder ere I go
With visions of the joys denied to me ?
I bear, unwearied and erect, this day
The weight upon my head of six score years ;
And I am strong, though Desert-worn and old,
As when I stood a hundred years ago
Within the shadow of a throne and saw
The sorrows of my people. But this strength,
Which might have led the Host victorious on
From height to height till all the Land is won,
Is scorned by Thee, and wasted at the last,
And only serves to bear me up the Mount
That I may die.

And a new leader waits,
Chosen of God, to take my place and guide
The ransomed people home. For God is quick
To save His own ; before one Captain falls
Another ready stands equipped and strong
To fight the sacred battles of the King,
That no man may be missed too bitterly
Or mourned too long in Israël. And thus

In Aaron's place at once another Priest
Stood ministering, called of God and blessed
As Aaron was. For we hold office, high,
Mysterious, and sacred, in the Name
Of One who changes not and cannot die,
True Prophet and High Priest of Israël:
And till He comes, God leaves Him not without
A constant Witness.

Now the hour is come
When I in turn must pass the Banner on
To other hands. I lay my burdens down
In these thick shadows underneath the Mount,
And in the cold pale light of dawn, before
The Camp awakes and all the happy stir
Of life begins once more, alone I go
To seek for Death.

I pass the goodly tents
Of Jacob, where the happy people sleep
So near the bright fulfilment of their dream:
They hear no sound of footsteps in the dawn,
Nor know that at this hour I pass away,
Foregoing the reward of all our quest,
Alone and desolate.

When Aaron went
With weary footsteps up his Mount of Death,
He was not called to climb alone from height

To height, till at the awful Gates of Light
His spirit waited. O my God, this day
On my last journey I look up to Thee,
And bless Thy name for every tender drop
Of comfort granted to my brother's heart—
Denied to mine. For he was well content
To rise and go; not one entreating word
He spake against the sentence, not one cry
His fervent spirit sent to God, when He
Spake to us both of sudden Death at hand
And entrance to the Blessed Land denied.
He read the due reward of hasty word
And angry sign, and was content in God,
And grieved alone that we had grieved Him sore.

For he was ever swift of heart, and swift
Of thought and speech, and prodigal of powers
Which my slow spirit husbanded. And thus
When the day died, his long day's strength was
gone,
And he was twice content, because the will
Of God should be fulfilled in giving him
A briefer journey through the Wilderness,
Though he should miss thereby the Promised Land.
But ah, for me, for me, what comfort waits?
I miss not one sad step of all the way,

Not one fierce sun that smote our heads by day,
Not one pale evening, faint with hope deferred,
But only the sweet Rest, the promised joy,
That should atone for all.

In my dull breast

The long hope of my Desert-life is slow
To die: and I have cried to God again,
And yet again, against the just reward
Which He appoints to me: I have not bent
As Aaron bent at once, to kiss the rod
Without a murmur. Yet, my God, I come,
I come to see the Land of my desire,
And then to die.

Now far below me lies

The mighty Host at rest, above me Death
Is waiting pitiless to take the prey.
I climb from point to point, and as I go
A gracious Presence draws more close to me,
The Hand that led me through the Wilderness
Forsakes me not.

And as I climb the steep

Long mountain-road, I think of Aaron still,
And how we travelled with him, when he went
As now I go to Death, and how we spake
Of all our walkings in the Wilderness,
Of Egypt's distant Land, of Miriam,

And of that Mount of God, where long ago
My Brother met and kissed me, and became
The willing sharer of my joy and grief.
And, still ascending slowly, Aaron heard,
Or thought he heard, upon the golden air
The voice of Miriam singing in the height
Above us; and he said, "She comes once more,
Our sister comes to greet us with a song,
As in old days. Oh, sweet the sign to me!"
But my dull ears were gladdened by no sound
Of heavenly music, though again he said,
"The clear voice sings of triumph in the height
Of glory and of God; O Brother, hear!
This is the song of Moses!"

But to me
The golden air of sunset bore the weight
Of utter silence, and of Death at hand.
Then as we neared the summit Aaron pressed
Before us, for our faltering feet would fain
Have still delayed him.

On the height he paused
As one content and smiling at the goal
Of his desire; the Gates of Light were near
And open wide for him, from that dark hill
One step would take him home. Thus smiling
still

He kissed us tenderly, and said Farewell,
With lingering sweetness, such as dying men
Show ever to their dear ones, though the Gates
Stand wide. Once more he raised his Priestly
hands

And blessed us in the Holy Name of God;
Then bade me take the garments made for him,
For glory and for beauty, one by one,
And robe the new High Priest. With trembling
hands

And sinking heart, I stripped him of his robes,
And with the sacred vestments, one by one,
As God commanded us, I clothed his son.
And when the new High Priest before us stood,
His father gave one long sweet look to him
And one to me,—the last, O God! was mine,—
But spake no further word. Serene he stood
As one unclothed, and ready for the robe
Of higher service.

And as we beheld,
A Cloud came down and overshadowed him
And us—the solemn Cloud we know so well
Of God's immediate Presence, awful, vast,
Yet full of tenderness, infolding us
And all our weakness in an infinite
Embrace. We knelt in silence on the Mount,

In that thick gentle darkness for a space,
Each soul alone with God.

And when the Cloud
Withdrew from us, and we could see once more
The sinking sun, and all the lonely peaks
Around us shine, behold, my brother lay
Serene and silent in the arms of Death.

* * * * *
And now my time is come; the summit nears,
The vision of the Country is at hand.
Alone I go, yet not alone, to see
The end of all my hopes. How sweetly blow
The flowers about the solemn gates of Death;
The Hand that led me through the Wilderness
Has sown them here for me, and leads me still
From height to height.

Now on the farthest point
I stand with God, to view the Promised Land,
The goal of our long quest. O Land, desired
And dreamed of day and night by all our tribes,
Yet fair beyond the fairest dream, at length
I see thee smile before me in the sun,—
I, with the everlasting Arms around
And underneath me, look this day on thee,
And my heart breaks not at the sight, although
I must not enter.

God has drawn so near,
And looks so sweetly on my soul, and gives
Such full forgiveness, and peace, and love,
I cannot leave His side, for I am His.
Ev'n the dear Land invites my heart in vain ;
And if the angels came to lead me there
Smiling upon me, I could say them Nay.
O God, O Just, and True, and Well-beloved,
And mine for ever ! I have gone too far
And drawn too close, for any sight or sound
To tempt my burning heart away from Thee :
No more could I descend the Mount, no more
Dream of an earthly Rest.

Now shall mine eyes
Behold the sweetness, long denied to them
Because I could not see Thy Face and live ;
Now, O my God, mine Holy One, mine All,
Unveil Thy Glory, let me see Thy Face,
And joyful die.

DEATH IN THE HOUSE.



AND art thou then so glad,
Beloved, in thy sleep?
So careless of the tears
Which we, deserted, weep?

Thou hast the air of one
To whom glad news is sent,
From the far country of his home
After long banishment.

Who came from that sweet Land
The happy news to tell,
Then sealed thy smiling lips
To keep the secret well?

Have we no part nor lot
In this strange joy of thine?
Must darkness close on us
When God on thee doth shine?

Thou liest at thy goal
 Upon the Master's breast,
And wearest the high smile
 Of a victorious rest.

Yet thou art still our own,
 And we may dare to kiss
The brow that shall be crowned
 In fairer lands than this,—

Our own, and not our own,
 So near, and yet so far ;
Meeting the touch of each fond hand,
 Yet distant as a star.

We cannot reach the height
 Of thy sublime repose ;
Thou hast resigned thy share
 In our poor joys and woes.

Thou liest day and night
 In this pale ecstasy ;
Our darkness and our light
 Are both alike to thee.

Thus art thou strange to us,
 Thy presence, ever dear,

Grows awful in the house,
And whispers thoughts of fear.

Therefore at length we say
A long and deep Farewell,
And choose a solemn place
Where thou apart shalt dwell,—

Content to draw a veil
Across the face we love,—
The smile we cannot read
Caught from the Hills above.

Thou wilt return no more
To bless our common life ;
But we will seek thy side
In the ending of our strife :

And we shall hear in turn
The sweet news God will tell,
And take His seal upon our lips
To keep the secret well.

LOST, IN THE TEMPLE.



THE last rite ended, all the solemn work
Fulfilled and sealed, they left the Holy Shrine.
With sacred fire still burning in each soul,
And sacred music lingering on the ear,
Forth by the City Gate they took their way,
And gentle converse with each other held ;
Whilst back, to common life and daily toil,
From those unwonted heights of holy joy
They travelled side by side. And as they went,
They felt the fancied Presence of the Child,
And doubted not that He was in the midst,—
That somewhere in their moving company
He walked serene, towards their northern home,—
And that, at any hour, a rapid search
Would meet His answering smile.

And some there be
Who go, the whole day's journey of their life,
Content to fancy Christ must be with them,
Because, in crystal clearness of the dawn,

They were presented in the Temple-courts,
And found the ready shelter of His arms,—
Too soon abandoned for the ways of men.
For, through the heat and burden of the day,
They hurry onward, heaping gold on gold,
Or care on care ; still dreaming that the Lord—
Unsought, unlooked for, all these busy hours—
Is of their company ; that at any time
A hand stretched forth must touch His garment's
hem.

But when the evening falls along the land,
And the first chill wind from the valley creeps
Through flesh and spirit, fear draws near to them,
And they look round for Him who should be there
Clothed in eternal patience, waiting still
For this late hour of need. What marvel, then,
If that Fair One, who welcomed them at dawn
With ready sweetness to His Father's House,
Tarries at even there, and must be sought
With tears and trembling ?

Thus it was that day
With those who journeyed from Jerusalem.
For, when the shadows lengthened on the road,
And the first breath of evening stirred the trees,
The hearts, that had been satisfied to dream
Of the Child's Presence moving in the midst,

Whilst they were chiefly claimed by other
thoughts,—
Startled, awoke, to feel the pressing need
Of His uplifted face. The night drew near,
And for twelve blessed years His gentle eyes
Had made all darkness light ; and the soft touch
Of His embracing arms had been the sweet
Response to every sigh. But now they called,
And He refused ; they stretched sad hands to Him,
And He regarded not. The Child was gone,
Like some sweet vision, granted for a time,
And then withdrawn : He was not in the throng
Which from God's House were come, nor in the trees
Which whispering stood : He was not in that sound
Of sacred, sighing music, which had swept
Across the holy hills, and followed them
From God's own Presence ; nor in that clear flame
Which had been kindled at the altar-fires
In every soul. And as the first star rose,
And looked upon them coldly from the sky,
They saw their desolation. Fear took hold
Upon them, and with trembling steps they turned
To seek the Blessed Child—if haply they
Might find Him at their need. But He afar
Tarried, serene, within His Father's House,
Making no sign.

And this, in these last days,
Is still His wont. If we entreat Him not,
With heart and soul on fire, to come with us
From sacred feast, or calm retreat of prayer,
Forth to the common storm of life, which beats
Against the Temple-doors, He tarries still
Behind us as we go. Yea, doth He glide
From careless hands which should have held Him
fast ;

Then go we empty from our Father's House,
And leave behind our Blessing, and know it not.
Though solemn music from the Temple-courts
Follows our happy steps ; and in our hearts
The fire, caught from the altar, burns sublime ;
And all our holy garments bear the scent
Of myrrh and frankincense ; and grace is poured
On many lips, and converse high we hold,
One with another, on the homeward way,—
Ah ! let us see to it, that in the midst
He walketh clear and fair. Or we shall know,
When evening shadows gather on the land,
And keen desire shall stretch her hand for Him,
That He has tarried in the Father's House,
And we have far to seek.

Thus sorrowing,
And full of fear, they sought the Holy Child

That day along the road, and found Him not.
They called Him by His name ; and the low hills,
Catching the blessed sound, repeated it
One to another, and the evening wind
Made music of it,—but He answered not.
Yet—silent unto them, and far away—
He drew the sorrowful seekers to Himself :
Along the road, and through the City Gate,
Their faltering feet were guided, till at length
Within the Father's House they saw His face,
And were exceeding glad.

He tarries now,
Serene, within the Temple-courts afar :
And if it seems to us that all in vain
We stretch our hands to Him, and, praying, hear
No heavenly answer on the wandering wind,
Yet let us put a steadfast trust in Him.
For—silent unto us, and far away—
He draws each sorrowful seeker to Himself,
Across the dreary spaces of the world.
His secret cords will guide our faltering steps
By the right way, up to the City Gate,
Into the glorious Palace of the King,
The Father's House. And we shall see His face.

ASCENSION DAY AMONGST THE PYRENEES.

“That we may in heart and mind Thither ascend, and with Him
continually dwell.”



AR off amongst the pleasant hills
We raised our eyes to God,
And sought, in heart and mind, to tread
The path our Master trod—
By open gates beyond the sun
His presence bright to gain,
That we might There, by faith and prayer,
His joyful guests remain.

But ever, as we sought to pass
Beyond those hills of snow,
Our wandering hearts would change, and turn
To seek the things below ;
The sweet bells down the valley rang,
The cross stood crowned with flowers,
Beneath the hill, we lingered still,
Through those long sunny hours.

And no soft whisper on the air,—
As we heard the sweet bells ring,—
Told us that one most dear to us
Was passing on the wing ;
That where we vainly sought to rise
His feet triumphant trod,
From height to height, by paths of light,
Up to the Feet of God.

Once more we seek, in heart and mind,
That Holy Place to win,
Beyond the hills, beyond the sun,
By faith to enter in ;
Again the Master bids us rise
To share His promised rest,
Whilst those we love, who dwell above,
Smile on us from His breast.

And, year by year, as this sweet day
Lights up the mountain snows,
By God's good grace, our Home on high
Clearer and clearer glows ;
We tread the hills, we see the gates,
We hear the Angels sing,
By faith and prayer, we enter There,
And dwell with Christ our King.

WASHED ASHORE.

“That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”



STRANGERS, and silent,—with no voice to tell
Their name and country, with no power to
clasp,
In mute appeal for shelter, those pale hands
Wrung by the storm,—they cast themselves
on you,

Wrapped in that soft sad dignity of death
Which feareth no refusal, and will hear
No cold or careless word.

And tenderly
This sacred faith of the Dead is justified ;
Ye hasten forth to greet them on the shore,
And bring the fairest robe to put on them ;
And, for His sake who lived for all, and died,
Ye lay the strangers in a holy place,
To rest beside your sleeping saints, your own,
Whom God has gathered in His heart in peace.

And sweetly in their nameless graves they sleep,
Not heeding the low tread of summer wind
And summer wave along the shore beneath ;
Nor starting at the winter storms, that call
The sea to sudden fury.

And as they sleep
One draweth nigh, Whose footsteps are not known,
And writes upon these nameless graves a Name
Secret and wonderful, and underneath,
“I was a stranger, and ye took Me in.”
Now when your hearts are gentle, and your eyes
Washed, and made pure by tears of pitying love,
And heaven shines opened over the place of grave ,
In its sweet sunshine ye can read the Name,
And joyful say, We did it unto Him.
But in the years to come, in sunless days,
With eyes grown dim and dull with earthly care
Or earthly good, it may be ye shall pass,
And see no word from God upon the stone,
Where long ago ye laid the strangers down
To take their rest.

Then tarry there a while
To muse and pray ; for when the winds of God
Begin to blow upon your soul once more,
The clouds will break, and Heaven will smile again
Above this place of graves. And when your heart,

So dull and blind with earthly things, becomes
As the heart of a little child,—then search, and see
The sacred writing shine upon the stones,—
“ I was a stranger, and ye took Me in.”

Hereafter, helpless, on a far-off Shore
Serene and wonderful, shall ye be cast
By the rough waves of death ; a Shore most sweet
Yet all unknown—strange to your dazzled sight
Its shining sands, the crystal streams which flow
In measured music softly to the sea,
And strange the towers and palaces which shine
Golden among the hills. And new the Light,—
Not falling from the moon, nor sun, nor stars,—
But from the Face of God, above the Land
Immediate.

Then shall not those, whom ye
Received and sheltered on the dim gray shore
In the old days of earth, what time the sea
Sighing had cast them out,—come down in white,
Alive for evermore and crowned with joy,
And greet you, smiling, on that golden strand ;
To everlasting Mansions leading you,
And to the joyful Presence of the King.

THE UNWELCOME YEAR.



THE New Year steals across the snow,
His feet are at the door,
But she is weeping sad and low,
Upon her cottage floor.
The room is cold, the lamp is dim,
She will not rise and welcome him.

“Hast thou no feast to spread to-night
As thou didst for other years?
No song to sing of the promised light?
No greeting but those tears?
I come, the gift of God to thee,
Wilt thou not rise and welcome me?”

But “No,” she murmurs low and sad,
And will not lift her face,
“Last year a merry welcome had
When he came to our poor place,
We made a little feast for him,
And the lamp shone bright, now always dim.

“ But when the year was changed and old,
 He dealt me such a blow,
That all my heart is faint and cold,
 Far colder than thy snow,—
He took mine only one away,
And dashed the life-light from my day.

“ No coming year shall welcome be
 To this bare house of mine,
I have no song to sing to thee,
 No wreath of hope to twine ;
I prayed to die, ere I should hear
The footsteps of another year.”

Unwelcome thus, the gift of God
 Came in by that sad door,
Yet, as his feet her threshold trod
 The faint heart beat once more ;
For not alone, ah, not alone
The pale New Year before her shone !

She saw One enter, treading low
 And softly, at his side,
She saw, by gleaming robes of snow
 The vesture strangely dyed,—
The sandalled foot that shows a scar,
The tender hands where nail-prints are.

Then, looking upwards from her place,
And trembling in the night,
She caught the shining of His face
Who makes our darkness light,
And with a cry of wonder sweet
She knelt to kiss the Master's feet.

“ I knew how changed and desolate
This lonely house must be,
How faint the heart that should await
The gift I sent to thee,—
The vacant chair, the vanished light,
Were present to My heart to-night.

“ And I am come, from cloudless skies
That hear no sound of woe,
To this poor earth that moaning lies
Beneath her veil of snow,—
I come to bid thee rise, and make
This New Year welcome for My sake.

“ Look up, sad heart, and face the dawn,
Look up, and lean on Me,
These hours shall speed thy spirit on
To where thy treasures be ;
But every hour thy hands must move
In ministries of watchful love.”

His voice is like the summer wind
That blows upon the grass,—
The winter-time is left behind,
The haunting shadows pass,—
And Hope awakens, singing clear,
To bless the morning of the Year.

LAMPS, OR STARS.



HE night is dark, and strange my way,
But God has lit for me
Fair Lamps, to lead me to the Day
Which I desire to see—

My Saints, whose souls have caught His flame,
And burn beneath His skies,
With fires that from the Altar came,
And to the Altar rise.

Pure lights of tender love, that glow
Around the feet of night,
And cast on earthly wastes of snow
A gleam of heavenly light.

I shall not miss the Homeward road,
Nor lose the promised rest,
For all my lamps are lit by God,
And point me to His Breast.

Thus in the starless night I sang,
And did not faint nor fear ;
Though all the world with tempests rang,
God and His Saints were near.

But now, my Saints are passing fast,
Their tender lights withdrawn ;
And, " This is night indeed at last,"
I cry, as each is gone.

" O cruel winds of Death, that rise
And rage through helpless lands,
To dash the light from loving eyes,
The staff from feeble hands !

" Was it not dark enough below,
Or bright enough in heaven,
That God should stoop to rob me so
Of the Lamps His love had given ? "

But to my wild and bitter cry
A tender answer came ;
It fell in music from the sky,
It named me by my name.

“ Look up, Beloved ! ” it sweetly said,
“ Look onward to the Day !
The Lamps are not blown out and dead
Along thy darkened way.

“ No longer round the shadowy feet
Of thy sad night they gleam,
With trembling radiance, strangely sweet,
Like pale lights of a dream.

“ But calm, around the Feet of God,
Behold they steadfast shine,
And light, as Stars, thy wintry road,
And lift thy heart to Mine.”

And thus above my darkened way
My God has set for me
Pure lights to lead me to the Day
Which I desire to see.

For every Lamp that trembled here
And faded in the night,
Behold a Star, serene and clear,
Smiles on me from the Height ;

My Stars above, my Stars alone,
Unseen by strangers' eyes,
For me they burn before the Throne,
In calm and cloudless skies.

And onward to the Goal I press,
Leaning on Him I love ;
And darker grows the wilderness,
Brighter the Home above.

IDOLS IN THE TEMPLE.



SET them in the Temple of my God,
Close by His Altar, one on either hand,
Stately and fair ; and when the incense rose
In clouds of sweetness, and the music pealed
Along the sacred roof, to raise my soul
From height to height of praise, I only bent,
Hearing that glorious summons, lower yet
To kiss *their* feet. Those voices overhead
Chanted their names, the incense breathed of them,
And all my heart was wildly stirred and moved
By yearning love and passionate desire
To pour its hoarded treasures freely forth
For them alone—alas ! for them alone.

And often were their altars heaped with flowers,
When Thine, my God, was bare, and wore no sign
Of love ; for all the beatings of my heart
Were towards them. I worshipped in my dreams,
And woke at dawn, to gather lilies rare

And roses pale with dew, and every flower
Was only sweet to me, if I might bring
Its sweetness to their feet. With joy I caught
Each treasure sent of God, as a fresh gift
To dedicate upon those altars ; yea,
His kingdom suffered violence,—I sought
With wild and daring hands to tear from it
The living stars of God, that they might burn
And shine in sparkling crowns to grace the brows
Of my beloved : nothing was too high,
Too precious to be lavished where my heart
Had given itself.

But through those nights and days
How faint and low, within the holy place,
Trembled the silver lamp of love before
The Altar of my God ; and when at times
I bent the knee to it, still all my thoughts
Were wandering to my Idols, and my soul
Could find no voice with which to cry to Him
Or give Him praise : then would I rise unblessed,
And go to stand once more entranced before
Those fairer shrines, whilst low and tenderly
My heart sung to its well-beloved a song
Of praise and wonder.

Thus for many days,
Within the Temple built for God alone,

These smiled upon me—oh, how still and fair
And full of sweetness ! But a change drew near.

And one was every hour more beautiful,
And shone upon me, changing in my sight
From glory unto glory. Overhead
A window, bright with visions, gleamed on her,
And threw strange lights upon her lifted face,
And dyed her snowy robes with all the hues
Of heaven itself. Ah ! not from sun nor moon
This glory fell, but from the Throne of God
And of the Lamb. And still her beauty grew
Before my wistful gaze, and thrilled my soul ;—
It grew till, at her best and loveliest,
She was not,—God had taken her to grace
His own high Temple.

What a shadow fell
That moment on my heart ! the window fair
Was darkened in its place, the visions gleamed
And glowed no longer, and the empty shrine
Stood desolate and cold. For Heaven had won
What it desired, and closed its shining doors
Upon its blessèd guest ; and all the world
Seemed poor and bare and empty in my sight.

And at that time, when Death was in the air,

And trouble with its busy feet had pressed
Into the Temple, lo, another woe
Following quickly ! For, with stricken heart,
Oppressed by sudden grief and loss, I turned
To seek for comfort at the sister-shrine,
And found it not. The Idol spared to me
Looked coldly down ; and all the lovely light,
Which till that hour had shone upon it, paled
And flickered, ready to depart. Alas !
Each passing hour, less beautiful and true
This Idol faced me, changing in my sight
Into a common thing that grieved my soul.
The sun transfigured it no more by day,
The moon by night ; and I could see at length,
As the enchantment waned, that I had loved
A thing of clay, and clothed it like a god.
Mine own the gold that had been thickly laid
Upon this fading image : mine alone,
And freely given by a heart content
To be made poor and bare, that all her wealth
Might be for those she worshipped.

I had robbed
My soul for this ! Yea, more : my daring hand
Had robbed God also ; for the sparkling crown
Which I had set on this beloved head—
And scarcely deemed it fair enough—I knew

A stolen thing, one of the many crowns
That all are claimed by Him who died for all,
And lives for all, and reigns. And as I looked,
This stolen crown fell suddenly from brows
Too narrow for its glory ; fell, and lay
Before the silent Altar of my God.

Oh, long I gazed, with slowly dying love,
Upon my Idol—wasted, wan, uncrowned,
And changed into a common thing that grieved
My sinking soul! And yet not changed, but seen
And known at last.

Then, as the evening fell,
And every window darkened in its place,
And in the silence sorrow grew too great
For me to bear, I rose without a cry
And bore the dreary Image from its shrine
Forth of the Temple gates into the night,
And buried it far in a secret place
Known to my sorrowing angel and to God.
I buried it where heavy shadows sleep
Beside a sighing river, and I heaped
The stones of darkness over it.

And yet
I see its Semblance still : a haunting shade,
That grieves the light of day, and flits and moans

About the Temple doors, where once it stood
As god, and wore a crown. To other men
The form is still the same, the same the face ;
But not to me,—ah, nevermore to me !
My Idol lies dishonoured in its grave—
A thing twice dead, and buried out of sight ;
And this which wears its semblance is a ghost,—
No more, for ever, though it lives and moves
And has its home on earth !

When I had laid
This once fair Image in its silent place,
And turned to go, what desolation broke
Upon my soul bereaved ! The sense of loss
And utter loneliness, like bitter winds,
Swept through me, and I saw myself alone
From this time forth. Oh ! empty was the night ;
And empty day must follow it. For whom
Should I awake at dawn to gather flowers ?
For whom should every day bring its sweet work,
And every night its dream ? No treasure now
Had any worth for me—no stars of God
Were bright enough to tempt my soul again ;
For I had none upon whose heads to set
The jewels once desired.

My wandering feet
Brought me at length to stand before the gate

Of my deserted Temple. Long I stood,
And dared not lift the curtain—dared not face
The vacant shrines, the altars heaped with flowers
Which none regarded. But at length I said :
“ Death must be drawing near—my soul is spent,
And all is lost for ever ! I will pass
Within the Temple, and will die before
The long-neglected Altar of my God.”

I raised the heavy curtain with a hand
Which trembled greatly, for my strength was gone :
And as it fell behind me, closing in
My wandering spirit, all the holy place
Seemed full of grief and sighing, and I crept
With feeble and uncertain steps along
The solemn aisle. How vast and dim and strange,
How full of haunting shadows, was the Place
Once dear to me as home ! and sad the light
At the High Altar, dying in the night,
Alone, uncared for.

Once I turned to flee
In terror, but to whom could I appeal ?
And on whose pity could I cast my soul ?
Oh, might I dare, with trembling feet, to draw
Near to the sacred Shrine, left desolate
By my wild, wandering heart ! Would not a wind,

Icy and terrible, from within the veil,
Pierce me if I drew near, and slay me there?
Yet still I ventured onward, and no sword
Of bright, indignant Angels barred my way,
No cruel winds of wrath awoke, no voice
Commanded me to stand far off, and meet
The judgment I had earned so well.

Ah, no !

He, waiting by His Altar, said no word
To make me fly from Him ; He suffered me
Nearer and nearer yet to come to Him :
I saw the shadowy form, the light upon
His bended head, the pity of His face
Which drew me onward, till I stood before
That long-forsaken Altar, and forgot
Myself, and all but Him.

Then suddenly

The vision paled and vanished, and I saw
No Man awaiting me ; but faint and dim
The sacred lamp was burning, high and cold
The Altar stood, and dark the awful veil
Which hung behind it : silent all, and sad,
Forsaken in the night. Yet God was near,
I felt His presence, though the Sign was gone,—
And love awoke in my cold breast, and cried
As in old times to Him, to Him alone !

Before the silent Shrine I cast myself,
Forgetting all but Him, and lay for hours,
And wept, and prayed, and waited till the night
Was spent. Then, at the solemn hour of dawn,
The answer came. He gave Himself to me,—
To me,—to one who had forsaken Him,
And served at other altars, lavishing
His gold and mine. Oh, poor and needy now,
Bereaved and desolate, my soul was come
To dwell beneath His Shadow, and to build
Her nest beside His Altar ; nevermore—
Ah, nevermore—to seek another rest.

Now in the Temple ONE is King alone,
And unto Him the clouds of incense rise,
And all the music praises Him, and draws
My spirit higher ; whilst His whispered name
Is like sweet ointment poured upon the air,
And fills the House.

And sometimes all the Place
Is flooded with celestial light, which streams
Through those great windows, stained with visions
rare ;
Till every stone, transfigured on the wall
Or in the pavement, glows, a jewel dyed
With hues of heaven. Then upon my soul

A sevenfold light is shining, from the Throne
Of God and of the Lamb ; and in that light
I rise and shine.

And sometimes, over all
The Holy Place, a gentle gloom—a hush—
Falls silently ; beneath the wings of God,
Hidden and low,—all open vision fled,—
My spirit nestles then.

And there are hours
When tears and sighs are in the Temple meet,
And dear to Heaven ; and these I bring to Him.
Sighs for that haunting Shadow at the gate,
And for all wandering souls beneath the stars ;
For every broken Idol once adored
By any heart on earth, and for the hearts
That break when Idols fall ; for vanished dreams,
For fine gold changed and dim, and precious gold
Wasted and lost for ever : and each sigh
Breathed at this Altar is a prayer to God,
And brings its answer ; every tear that falls
Before Him is remembered.

O my God !
Thus let me weep at times and sigh to Thee,
Holding Thy feet,—not desolate myself,—
But for the desolate in every land :
Thus let me pray,—embracing Thy dear Cross,—

For every banished soul, Thy banished ones,
And *mine*. Yea, let me even sit and weep
At times soft idle tears, sad tears, for those
Who weep no more, who sit beyond the stars,
And sing to God, and have no need of me.

Then, after weeping, breaks the sun once more
In added glory ; after gloom and shade
The visions start to life, the music wakes,
The incense rises, mingled still with prayers—
Glad prayers for all beloved ones who dwell
Beneath these happy skies. Then, ready girt
With joy and strength, I stand to minister
Before the Altar : and, by day and night,
In sunshine and in shadow, O my God !
My heart is henceforth Thine, and Thou art mine !

THE GARMENT CAST ASIDE.

I.



SAW the Master passing by
In the heat of the heavy day,
I heard the voice of them that cry
About His path away.

The sun shone fair on weary men,
On women poor and sad,
On little children in His train
Who saw Him, and were glad.

But idle, cold, I stood apart
To see the Master pass ;
His beauty shone before my heart
Darkly as in a glass.

I thought to let Him go indeed,
Without a word or sign,

I was aware of no sharp need
In that dull soul of mine,

Till, at the corner near the gate,
Beneath the spreading tree,
I saw Him pause, I saw Him wait,—
Ah, could it be for me?

One further step, and from my sight
His Form had passed away !
One further step, and what a night
Had overwhelmed my day !—

But, suddenly, to Him I cried
For grace and pity free ;
And, where He stood, He opened wide
His tender arms for me.

I wore the purple robe of pride,
But, when He called my name,
I cast the robe of pride aside,
And to His Feet I came.

The cherished garment at His word
Lay low in dust that day,
And free I stood before the Lord
To follow Him away.

II.

A little while, and on the road
By the fair City Gate,
Mine eyes shall see the hosts of God
In stately triumph wait.

The dawn will smile on victors then,
On women crowned with peace,
On little children in His train
Whose songs will never cease.

And they shall stretch their hands to me,
And smile to see me come ;
And the King's voice, in melody,
Shall bid me welcome home.

Yet, in this earthly raiment drest,
I may not pass within
The pearly gates of perfect rest,
Where all are pure from sin.

A robe of flesh and blood I wear,
But at the voice of God,

My soul her earthly robe shall tear
And leave it on the sod ;

Then, like a bird escaped, and free
To seek her chosen rest,
Shall, singing, to her shelter flee
Upon the Master's Breast.

A PRODIGAL SON.



HAVE been hungry on my way,—
Hungry and thirsty many a day,
With a restless craving I cannot stay.
The Earth is iron beneath my tread,
The Heavens are brass above my head,
And all my labour under the sun
Is full of trouble and heaviness,
With none to share it and none to bless.

Freely I scattered the wealth I had,
And men came, smiling, to feast with me,
Until my treasure was wholly spent ;
And, smiling still, they turned and went
To seek new friends. Oh, gay and glad
They passed away with their careless feet,
And I heard them singing along the street,
As they left me alone to starve and die
Under the stars ;—*they* heard no cry,
Though my heart was stricken and moaning sore.

Yet I looked for some who should pity me,
And found no man. At many a door
I stretched my empty hands for bread,
And see, they have given me stones instead !

And the cruel skies above me roll,
And I am hungry, body and soul,
With a restless craving I cannot stay.
Yet God is my Father still, they say—
Pure and awful, and far away,
But yet my Father ; and one would think
He might send me a crumb from His Table fair ;
Or one of His angels, who dwell on the brink
Of the Crystal River, perhaps might spare
One drop for a fainting soul like mine.
But ah ! they stately stand and shine,
And show no mercy.

I know this day
There is bread enough and plenty to spare
In my Father's House : the servants there
Can eat in His presence, and all the Land
Floweth with honey and milk and wine ;
Whilst I,—I perish for lack of bread,
And pass on hungry and hard bestead.
Is it good for a starving man to stand

In the flashing lights of your wide Hall-door,
To see you greet with a ready hand
Your chosen guests in robe and gem?
They do not hunger, therefore store
Of sumptuous food is spread for them;
They do not thirst, so costly wine
From beyond the sea in their cups must shine:
But the man at the door is starving for bread,
So there is not a crumb to spare for him;
Send him away, for the Feast is spread,
Send him away, through the shadows dim:
A black river rolls at the end of the street,—
Good refuge for troublesome, starving men,
Let him seek its shelter with silent feet.
To the Feast! and he will not disturb you again.

And *I* have stood,—not beside the Door,
But afar on a wide and desolate road,
And lifted mine eyes to the Halls of God
Lighted for feasting and song, where store
Of heavenly meat and wine is spread,
And the Banner of Love gleams overhead.
And I have said in my agony,
It were good, I think, for a man to see
The angels standing with hungry eyes
Outside the gate of their Paradise!

Unto which of them has He ever said,
Thou art my son, yet their Feast is spread ;
Whilst I,—I stand in the image of God,—
By that same token a child of His,
With a right to the Father's care and kiss,—
And starve, looking up to His high abode,
And stumbling along the white Death-road.

Yet I do remember my sin this day :
Did I not sign my right away,
The right of a child to the children's bread,
The right to a Love that is more than meat,
And better than life, when life is sweet ?
Alas, I remember ! I shut the door
Of my Father's House, and left Him word
That I required His favours no more,
And should live my life away from Him
In a distant land. Thus with a sword
I pierced His heart, and went my way.
And I do remember my sin this day,
When the thought of the Father's House returns,
And again my wasted spirit burns
To taste of the Love which I cast away.

Now will I arise and go to Him,
Across the mountains wild and dim,

Through the water-floods that darkly roll.
Though the road be dreary and hard to find,
And mine eyes with famine are almost blind,
And the weakness of death assails my soul,
Yet will I struggle along, till I see
The House of my Father smile on me.

But when at length to my failing eyes,
Across the quickly darkening land,
The distant towers of the Palace rise,
Shall I see in the twilight the awful glow
Of a mighty angel in robes of snow,
With a sword of fire in his lifted hand
Keeping the gate, lest such as I,
Under cover of night, should venture nigh?

Or if no one stands at the Palace gate,
Shall I dare to approach, and trembling wait,
And knock a little—oh ! just to see
If any one comes who remembers me?
And if no one comes, and the night falls late,
I—lost and starving, a helpless thing—
Will lie at the door and hear them sing
In my Father's House ; and I will cry
At every pause, " Father, I lie !
Here at thy gate, Father, I die ! "

Or if the door should be open and free,
Some hand must have set it wide for me,
For I shut it fast when I went away.
Can any one wish to see me again?
Can my Father's heart be open to-day?
Ah! how shall I dare to enter in,
Even *if* the door stand wide and free,
And the lingering sunlight shine on me,
And all things invite my fainting soul
To enter and rest? For sorrow and sin
Have driven me far from my Father's breast.

And if I try at length in my pain
To find my way to His heart again,
Will He not say, though He say with tears,
“Thou art no more worthy to be My son.
Thy place is filled and thy work is done
By faithful servants. Arise, and go
To eat the fruit of thy wasted years.”

Oh, fear is heavy, and hope is low,
Yet must I arise and go to Him,
Across the mountains wild and dim,
For I fain would die with my face to Him!

* * * * *

Only a little way I went;

But my feeble strength was already spent,
When my Father came to meet His son.

He had travelled far from His bright abode,
By the desolate length of the dreary road ;
He had crossed the mountains one by one,
And the valleys where rivers of sorrow run.
And now, at a price of infinite pain,
He took me home to His heart again.

LOST IDOLS.

I.



HEY lie below the waving grass
In sunshine clear and fine,
Beneath quick feet that careless pass
They sleep and make no sign,—
Low, low they lie,
Whom I had set so high.

I throned them in a lofty place,
And worshipped at the shrine ;—
God cast them down before my face,
Beneath His feet, and mine,—
Low, low they lie,
Whom I had set so high.

When I draw near their rest to see,
Now must I bend as low

As once they bent, to smile on me
And bless me long ago ;—
Low, low they lie,
Whom I had set so high.

II.

They stand upon the Sea of Glass
Where God Himself doth move,
Before their burning spirits pass
His mysteries of love,—
Far, far on high,
They shine beyond the sky.

He caught them from the thrōnes I made,
Which were too poor for them,
He set them at His side, arrayed
In robe and diadem,—
Far, far on high,
They shine beyond the sky.

When I draw near their rest to see,
Now must I climb the Height,
And where the heavenly mansions be
Behold them crowned with light,—
Far, far on high,
They shine beyond the sky.

BEHIND HIM, WEEPING.



THOU sittest with Thy brethren, and the feast
Is spread for them and Thee. With silent
step
I enter, and along the lighted Hall
Pass swiftly, till I reach Thy place, and stand
Behind Thee, weeping ; soft Thy shadow falls
And covers me from trouble and reproach,
That none may chide my tears or bid me go.

I in Thy Presence stand, but dare not ask
To see Thy face ; I, sinful, weak, and drest
In these poor robes, already rent and stained,
Could not endure to meet Thy softest look,
Thine eyes of infinite love. I ask Thee, not
To turn the brightness of Thy face on me,
But for a little while to let me stand
In this soft darkness of Thy Presence veiled,—
At Thy dear feet, behind Thee,—weeping low
And unreprieved.

Oh, let me feel that Thou
Thou only, knowest where I silent stand,
Giving my soul to Thee : and let me hear
The tender whisper of forgiving Love,
That bids me go in peace.

Then will I rise,
And softly leave these lighted Halls, and pass
Into the stillness of a purer life.
Thy gentleness this night, hath made me great,
And I can dare all things, since unproved
My tears have fallen upon Thy sacred feet,
My hand hath touched Thee.

Still, O King, my King!
I could not see Thy lifted face, and live :
All the swift days of mine appointed time,—
When nearest by Thy tender favour drawn,—
My place is still behind Thee at Thy feet ;
And, covered by Thy shadow, still I weep.

Yet I believe that on a certain day—
Known only to my Lord, not dark nor light
But clear,—I, even I, shall lift my head
To watch His rapid footsteps on the Hills
Approaching me ; yea, calm and undismayed,
Upheld by Love, shall meet at length the
look

Of infinite Love, that gave Itself for me
And shall be mine for ever.

Ah ! no more

To stand behind Him weeping, in the shade
Of this mysterious Presence veiled and still ;
But seated at the Feast, I, last and least
Of all His blessèd guests, shall be made glad,
Beholding that fair beauty of the King
Which none can picture here. For this I wait.

GOOD-NIGHT ON A LONDON BRIDGE.

Suggested by the fact that one who was about to commit suicide, by leaping from a London Bridge into the River, was turned from his purpose by the voice of a passing stranger wishing him a kind and cheerful "Good-night."

I.



AND this is the end of the strife,
The goal of the bitter years,
The close of a wasted life
With its long dull hopes and fears :
To this dark end was I born,
And offered to Christ at the Font
By the tender faith of one
Who there blessed God for her son,
And feared no sorrow nor want.

She is safe in her happy Fold
From the storm and rain at night,
Safe from the hunger, and pain, and cold,
In a Country still and bright :

For she left me,—ah ! long ago,—
To enter her quiet Rest,
With One who came from the Silent Land,
And showed her a token in either hand,
And lifted her to His breast.

And I sought for many a day
To follow her blessèd feet,
Along the narrow and sacred way
That led to an end so sweet :
Through the dark and desolate years
A vision still blessed my soul,—
Her tender Image, leaning fair
From the wild mysterious heavens, where
They had crowned her at the Goal.

But the poverty and the toil,
The hunger and pain I bore,
Drove me to ways of sin at last,
And the lovely vision paled, and passed,
And has blessed me nevermore.
Ah ! never again a smile
Has lighted my valley of tears,
And never again a tender word
My cold and desolate heart has stirred,
Through the long and evil years.

And this is the bitter end !—

To stand on a Bridge, and moan
At the sight of Death, who looks up to me
From the sliding waters silently,
Shifting, and smiling, and beckoning me

To rush on a Fate unknown;
But I shrink from his cold embrace,
From the secret, so full of dread,
Which he will whisper, low in mine ear,
To chill my heart with a deadly fear
As the waters go over my head.

I think I can tell it now !—

That the living soul must flee,
Like a bird escaped from a broken snare,
From the River's grasp to the dark free air,
Must mount, and tremble, and fly—ah where?

And who shall entreat for me?
For the terrible chains I bear,—
This weight on my fettered soul,—
Can never avail to sink me quite
Body and spirit out of sight,
Where the sullen waters roll.

And yet, I must dare it all,
To whom can I go beside?

What other gate at my sorrowful call
Would throw its portals wide?
There are none to pity my moan,
Nor to speak of a promised Light;
Forsaken, in silence, alone
I go from the Bridge to-night.

II.

“Good-night,” he said as he passed,
“Good night” to a ruined soul,
To a spirit that stands aghast
In view of its desperate goal:
“Good night;” my God! what a night
Have I come to seek in the stream,
Where the dull slow waters sweep
To lie for ever and sleep,
With never a dawn nor dream.

Or, if there is more than this,
If the spirit will not rest,—
To wait till a terrible dawn shall shine
At length on this broken heart of mine,
And I rise from the River’s breast.
“Good night;” one has blessed my night,
But who shall bless my waking?

Shall an Angel greet me, walking in white
On the shore, when the Day is breaking?

Ah no ; for unsummoned, unsought,
Forgotten by earth and heaven,
I am going to force those sullen gates
Where many a desolate spirit waits
Till a word from God is given,
Till they hear His soft "Good-night"
As strikes their hour of rest,
And the curtains are sweetly drawn,
And folded safe till the Dawn
They sleep on the Father's Breast.

And is there a time for each,
An hour for returning Home ;
When the loneliest spirit that waits on God
Shall hear His whisper, "Thy path is trod,
No further thy feet shall roam" ?
Then how shall I rush this night
Uncalled, without a friend,
Into that Kingdom, fair and still,
Where the people sleep who have done His will
Or have suffered it to the end ?

"Good-night;" I have had at last
A sign from Heaven to-night ;

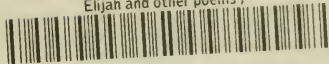
The darkness of death is passed,
I will watch for the morning light:
I will leave the River, and creep
Undone, but yet alive,
Back to the City streets again,
To the sorrowful haunts of living men,
Once more to struggle and strive.

I will face the pain and the cold,
The tempest of life alone,
As I faced them all of old
When my lingering vision shone ;
I will pity the sorrows of all
Who are ready to fail in the fight,
And a word may be sent on my faltering
breath
Which shall save some desperate soul from
death,
As mine has been saved to-night.

My God ! I am going home,
To my bare and desolate place ;
I will beat at the gates of Death no more,
But will wait till fair, at mine own low door,
I shall see Thy Messenger's face ;

Till the Angels sing, "Good-night,
Now strikes thine hour of rest,"
And the Bless'd One who died
Comes tenderly to my side,
And gathers me to His Breast.





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